

Posted on Sun, Apr. 25, 2010

Visiting editors on police, neighborhoods and adult ed

last updated: April 25, 2010 03:30:45 AM

Editor's note: Once a month we invite our visiting editors to share their views on a topic of their choice.

Karen Williams

The untold story of school district budget cuts is what is happening to adult education classes such as English as a second language and general education diploma preparation.

When the Legislature reduced average daily attendance payments last year, it attempted to soften the blow to school districts by taking away the restrictions or categories for the funding. This led to the demise of almost all CBET, or community-based English tutoring, classes, which provided the majority of the ESL classes in Modesto City Schools and other districts throughout the county.

With this change, Modesto City Schools reduced its number of ESL classes from 26 to four and does not offer GED preparation. With more cuts looming, Randy Fillpot, associate superintendent of Modesto City Schools, has said more reductions are unavoidable, although it hasn't been determined what those cuts will be.

According to Principal Alice Pallard, the Turlock School District is dropping to two GED classes (one online and one in Spanish) and cutting hours per week, but keeping 10 ESL classes.

Ceres, according to Dustin Pack, will have five ESL classes and one GED class.

The quiet dismantling of adult education, coupled with the rise in unemployment, is creating an invisible crisis.

The Stanislaus Workforce Alliance says one of the reasons given as to why more companies do not locate here is the low skill level of the work force. The drastic reduction of adult education is going to keep skill levels low and jobs scarce.

Williams is the executive director of the Stanislaus Literacy Center.

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